



U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress

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Summary

Special Operations Forces (SOF) play a significant role in U.S. military operations, and the Administration has given U.S. SOF greater responsibility for planning and conducting worldwide counterterrorism operations. U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has close to 60,000 active duty, National Guard, and reserve personnel from all four services and Department of Defense (DOD) civilians assigned to its headquarters, its four components, and one sub-unified command. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) directs increases in SOF force structure, particularly in terms of increasing enabling units and rotary and fixed-wing SOF aviation assets and units. USSOCOM Commander Admiral Eric T. Olson, in commenting on the current state of the forces under his command, noted that since September 11, 2001, USSOCOM manpower has nearly doubled, the budget nearly tripled, and overseas deployments have quadrupled; because of this high level of demand, the admiral added, SOF is beginning to show some “fraying around the edges,” and one potential way to combat this is by finding ways to get SOF “more time at home.”

Vice Admiral William McRaven has been recommended by the Secretary of Defense for nomination to replace Admiral Olson, who is retiring this year, as USSOCOM Commander. Vice Admiral McRaven’s concerns included impacts on readiness as a result of high operational tempo for USSOCOM forces. High operational tempo is having a negative impact on language and cultural training and also has made it difficult for SOF personnel to attend requisite schools and training that are necessary to maintain proficiency in a variety of areas. In addition, a lack of access to U.S. based rotary/tilt wing aircraft needed to train air crews and SOF ground forces is also having a detrimental impact on training.

USSOCOM’s FY2012 Budget Request is \$10.5 billion—with \$7.2 billion in the baseline budget and \$3.3 billion in the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget, representing an increase of 7% over the FY2011 Budget Request of \$9.8 billion. The House and Senate Armed Services Committees recommended fully funding the President’s \$10.5 billion budget request and added additional funds for other programs.

On January 6, 2011, DOD announced that, starting in FY2015, the Army would decrease its permanently authorized endstrength by 27,000 soldiers and the Marines would lose anywhere between 15,000 and 20,000 Marines. In addition, starting in 2012, the Air Force will reduce forces by 5,750. Because USSOCOM draws its operators and support troops from the services, it will have a smaller force pool from which to draw its members. Another implication is that these force reductions might also have an impact on the creation and sustainment of Army and Marine Corps “enabling” units that USSOCOM is seeking to support operations.

Another potential issue involves initiatives to get more “time at home” for SOF troops to help reduce stress on service members and their families. One of the major factors is that SOF has neither access to nor the appropriate types of training facilities near their home stations, thereby necessitating travel away from their bases and families to conduct pre-deployment training.

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Background

Overview

Special Operations Forces (SOF) are elite military units with special training and equipment that can infiltrate into hostile territory through land, sea, or air to conduct a variety of operations, many of them classified. SOF personnel undergo rigorous selection and lengthy specialized training. The U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) oversees the training, doctrine, and equipping of all U.S. SOF units.

Command Structures and Components

In 1986 Congress, concerned about the status of SOF within overall U.S. defense planning, passed measures (P.L. 99-661) to strengthen special operations' position within the defense community. These actions included the establishment of USSOCOM as a new unified command. USSOCOM is headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL. The commander of USSOCOM is a four-star officer who may be from any military service. President Obama has nominated Navy Vice Admiral William H. McRaven to be the next Commander of USSOCOM. The USSOCOM Commander reports directly to the Secretary of Defense, although an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities (ASD/SOLIC&IC) provides immediate civilian oversight over many USSOCOM activities.

USSOCOM has about 60,000 active duty, National Guard, and reserve personnel from all four services and Department of Defense (DOD) civilians assigned to its headquarters, its four components, and one sub-unified command.¹ USSOCOM's components are the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC); the Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM); the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC); and the Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC). The Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) is a USSOCOM sub-unified command. Additional command and control responsibilities are vested in Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOCs). TSOCs are theater-specific special operational headquarters elements designed to support a Geographical Combatant Commander's special operations logistics, planning, and operational control requirements, and are normally commanded by a general officer.²

¹ Information in this section is from "Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command," USSOCOM Public Affairs, February 2011, p. 7. DOD defines a sub-unified command as a command established by commanders of unified commands, when so authorized through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to conduct operations on a continuing basis in accordance with the criteria set forth for unified commands. A subordinate unified command may be established on an area or functional basis. Commanders of subordinate unified commands have functions and responsibilities similar to those of the commanders of unified commands and exercise operational control of assigned commands and forces within the assigned joint operations area.

² General Bryan D. Brown, "U.S. Special Operations Command: Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, first quarter 2006.

Expanded USSOCOM Responsibilities

In addition to Title 10 authorities and responsibilities, USSOCOM has been given additional responsibilities. In the 2004 Unified Command Plan, USSOCOM was given the responsibility for synchronizing DOD plans against global terrorist networks and, as directed, conducting global operations against those networks.³ In this regard, USSOCOM “receives, reviews, coordinates and prioritizes all DOD plans that support the global campaign against terror, and then makes recommendations to the Joint Staff regarding force and resource allocations to meet global requirements.”⁴ In October 2008, USSOCOM was designated as the DOD proponent for Security Force Assistance (SFA).⁵ In this role, USSOCOM will perform a synchronizing function in global training and assistance planning similar to the previously described role of planning against terrorist networks. In addition, USSOCOM is now DOD’s lead for countering threat financing, working with the U.S. Treasury and Justice Departments on means to identify and disrupt terrorist financing efforts.

Army Special Operations Forces

U.S. Army SOF (ARSOF) includes approximately 28,500 soldiers from the Active Army, National Guard, and Army Reserve organized into Special Forces, Ranger, and special operations aviation units, along with civil affairs units, psychological operations units, and special operations support units. ARSOF Headquarters and other resources, such as the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, are located at Fort Bragg, NC. Five active Special Forces (SF) Groups (Airborne),⁶ consisting of about 1,400 soldiers each, are stationed at Fort Bragg and at Fort Lewis, WA; Fort Campbell, KY; Fort Carson, CO; and Eglin Air Force Base, FL. Special Forces soldiers—also known as the Green Berets—are trained in various skills, including foreign languages, that allow teams to operate independently throughout the world. In December 2005, the 528th Sustainment Brigade (Special Operations) (Airborne) was activated at Ft. Bragg, NC, to provide combat service support and medical support to Army special operations forces.⁷

In FY2008, the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) began to increase the total number of Army Special Forces battalions from 15 to 20, with one battalion being allocated to each active Special Forces Group. In August 2008, the Army stood up the first of these new battalions—the 4th Battalion, 5th Special Forces Groups (Airborne)—at Fort Campbell, KY.⁸ The Army expects that the last of these new Special Forces battalions will be operational by FY2013.⁹

³ “Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command,” USSOCOM Public Affairs, February 2011, p. 4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Information in this section is from testimony given by Admiral Eric T. Olson, Commander, U.S. SOCOM, to the House Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee on the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Budget Request for the U.S. Special Operations Command, June 4, 2009. For a more in-depth treatment of Security Force Assistance, see CRS Report R41817, *Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance*, by Thomas K. Livingston.

⁶ Airborne refers to “personnel, troops especially trained to effect, following transport by air, an assault debarkation, either by parachuting or touchdown.” Joint Publication 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 12 April 2001, (As Amended Through 31 July 2010).

⁷ “Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command,” USSOCOM Public Affairs, February 2011, p. 13.

⁸ Sean D. Naylor, “Special Forces Expands,” *Army Times*, August 11, 2008.

⁹ Association of the United States Army, “U.S. Army Special Operations Forces: Integral to the Army and the Joint Force,” *Torchbearer National Security Report*, March 2010, p. 3.

Two Army National Guard Special Forces groups are headquartered in Utah and Alabama. An elite airborne light infantry unit specializing in direct action operations,¹⁰ the 75th Ranger Regiment, is headquartered at Fort Benning, GA, and consists of three battalions. Army special operations aviation units, including the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne), (SOAR) headquartered at Fort Campbell, KY, feature pilots trained to fly the most sophisticated Army rotary-wing aircraft in the harshest environments, day or night, and in adverse weather.

Some of the most frequently deployed SOF assets are civil affairs (CA) units, which provide experts in every area of civil government to help administer civilian affairs in operational theaters. The 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (Airborne) is the only active CA unit; all other CA units reside in the Reserves and are affiliated with conventional Army units. Military Information Support Operations (formerly known as psychological operations) units disseminate information to large foreign audiences through mass media. The active duty 4th Military Information Support Group (MISO), (Airborne) is stationed at Fort Bragg, and two Army Reserve MISO groups work with conventional Army units.

U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command Established¹¹

On March 25, 2011, the U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command (USASOAC) was activated at Ft. Bragg, NC. Commanded by a U.S. Army Aviation Brigadier General, USASOAC will command the 160th SOAR and other affiliated Army Special Operations Aviation organizations. USASOAC is intended to decrease the burden on the 160th SOAR commander (an Army colonel) so he can focus on warfighting functions as well as provide general officer representation at USASOC. In this role, the commander of USASOAC supposedly can better represent Army Special Operations aviation needs and requirements and have a greater influence on decisions affecting Army Special Operations Aviation.

Air Force Special Operations Forces¹²

The Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) is one of the Air Force's 10 major commands with over 12,000 active duty personnel and over 16,000 personnel when civilians, Guard, and Reserve personnel and units are included. While administrative control of AFSOC is overseen by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), operational control is managed by the USSOCOM commander. AFSOC units operate out of four major continental United States (CONUS) locations and two overseas locations. The headquarters for AFSOC, the first Special Operations Wing (1st SOW), and the 720th Special Tactics Group are located at Hurlburt Field, FL. The 27th SOW is at Cannon AFB, NM. The 352nd and 353rd Special Operations Groups provide forward presence in Europe (RAF Mildenhall, England) and in the Pacific (Kadena Air

¹⁰ Direct action operations are short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments, as well as employing specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets. Direct action differs from conventional offensive actions in the level of physical and political risk, operational techniques, and the degree of discriminate and precise use of force to achieve specific objectives.

¹¹ Michael Hoffman, "Interview: Brig. Gen. Kevin Mangum," *Defense News*, May 2, 2011, and U.S. Army Special Operations Command Fact Sheet, May 2011.

¹² Information in this section is from Lt Gen Wurster's presentation to the Air Force Association, September 14 2010. http://www.afa.org/events/conference/2010/scripts/Wurster_9-14.pdf and "Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command," USSOCOM Public Affairs, February 2011.

Base, Japan) respectively. The Air National Guard's 193rd SOW at Harrisburg, PA, and the Air Force Reserve Command's 919th SOW at Duke Field, FL, complete AFSOC's major units. A training center, the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School and Training Center (AFSOTC), was recently established and is located at Hurlburt Field. AFSOC conducts the majority of its specialized flight training through an arrangement with Air Education and Training Command (AETC) via the 550th SOW at Kirtland AFB, NM. AFSOC's four active-duty flying units are composed of more than 100 fixed and rotary-wing aircraft.

In March 2009, Headquarters AFSOC declared initial operational capability (IOC)¹³ for the CV-22.¹⁴ USSOCOM plans for all 50 CV-22s to be delivered to AFSOC by 2015.¹⁵ Since 2009, AFSOC has completed three overseas deployments, to Central America, Africa, and Iraq, and continues to be engaged currently in overseas contingency operations. Despite critical reviews of the aircraft, AFSOC considers the CV-22 "central to our future."¹⁶ AFSOC operates a diverse fleet of modified aircraft. Of 12 major design series aircraft, 7 are variants of the C-130, the average age of some of which is over 40 years old, dating from the Vietnam era. Because of the age of the fleet, AFSOC considers recapitalization one of its top priorities.

AFSOC's Special Tactics experts include Combat Controllers, Pararescue Jumpers, Special Operations Weather Teams, and Tactical Air Control Party (TACPs). As a collective group, they are known as Special Tactics and have also been referred to as "Battlefield Airmen." Their basic role is to provide an interface between air and ground forces, and these airmen have very developed skill sets. Usually embedded with Army, Navy, or Marine SOF units, they provide control of air fire support, medical and rescue expertise, or weather support, depending on the mission requirements.

As directed in the 2010 QDR, AFSOC plans to increase aviation advisory manpower and resources resident in the 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS). The 6th SOS's mission is to assess, train, and advise partner nation aviation units with the intent to raise their capability and capacity to interdict threats to their nation. The 6th SOS provides aviation expertise to U.S. foreign internal defense (FID) missions.

Naval Special Operations Forces¹⁷

The Naval Special Warfare Command (NSWC) consists of about 8,800 military and civilian personnel and is located in Coronado, CA. NSWC is organized around 10 SEAL Teams, 2 SEAL Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams, and 3 Special Boat Teams. SEAL Teams consist of six SEAL platoons each, consisting of two officers and 16 enlisted personnel. The major operational components of NSWC include Naval Special Warfare Groups One, Three, and Eleven, stationed in Coronado, CA, and Naval Special Warfare Groups Two and Four and the Naval Special

¹³ According to DOD IOC is attained when some units and/or organizations in the force structure scheduled to receive a system 1) have received it and 2) have the ability to employ and maintain it.

¹⁴ The CV-22 is the special operations version of the V-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft used by the Marine Corps.

¹⁵ USSOCOM Acquisitions and Logistics office, <http://www.socom.mil/soal/Pages/FixedWing.aspx>.

¹⁶ For further detailed reporting on the V-22 program, see CRS Report RL31384, *V-22 Osprey Tilt-Rotor Aircraft: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Jeremiah Gertler.

¹⁷ Information in this section is from "Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command," USSOCOM Public Affairs, February 2011, pp. 20-21.

Warfare Development Group in Little Creek, VA. These components deploy SEAL Teams, SEAL Delivery Vehicle Teams, and Special Boat Teams worldwide to meet the training, exercise, contingency, and wartime requirements of theater commanders. SEALs are considered the best-trained combat swimmers in the world, and can be deployed covertly from submarines or from sea- and land-based aircraft.

Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) ¹⁸

On November 1, 2005, DOD announced the creation of the Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) as a component of USSOCOM. MARSOC consists of three subordinate units: the Marine Special Operations Regiment, which includes 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Marine Special Operations Battalions; the Marine Special Operations Support Group; the Marine Special Operations Intelligence Battalion; and the Marine Special Operations School. MARSOC Headquarters, the 2nd and 3rd Marine Special Operations Battalions, the Marine Special Operations School, and the Marine Special Operations Support Group and the Marine Special Operations Intelligence Battalion are stationed at Camp Lejeune, NC. The 1st Marine Special Operations Battalion is stationed at Camp Pendleton, CA. MARSOC forces have been deployed worldwide to conduct a full range of special operations activities. By 2014, MARSOC is planned to have about 3,000 Marines, sailors, and civilians.

Marine Corps Force Structure Review¹⁹

In the fall of 2010, the Marines Corps conducted a force structure review that focused on the post Operation Enduring Freedom [Afghanistan] security environment. This review had a number of recommendations for Marine forces, including MARSOC. The review called for strengthening MARSOC by more than 1,000 Marines, including a 44% increase in critical combat support and service support Marines. It is currently not known how these proposed increases will translate into additional capabilities and new force structure and how much these proposed additions will cost.

Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC)

According to DOD, the JSOC is “a joint headquarters designed to study special operations requirements and techniques; ensure interoperability and equipment standardization; plan and conduct joint special operations exercises and training; and develop joint special operations tactics.”²⁰ While not officially acknowledged by DOD or USSOCOM, JSOC, which is headquartered at Pope Air Force Base, NC, is widely believed to command and control what are described as the military’s special missions units—the Army’s Delta Force, the Navy’s SEAL Team Six, the 75th Ranger Regiment, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and the Air

¹⁸ Information in this section is from “Fact Book: United States Special Operations Command,” USSOCOM Public Affairs, February 2011, p. 37.

¹⁹ “Reshaping America’s Expeditionary Force in Readiness: Report of the 2010 Marine Corps Force Structure Review Group,” March 14, 2011.

²⁰ USSOCOM website <http://www.socom.mil/components/components.htm>, accessed March 19, 2008.

Force's 24th Special Tactics Squadron.²¹ JSOC's primary mission is believed to be identifying and destroying terrorists and terror cells worldwide.

A news release by the U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) News Service which named Vice Admiral William McRaven as Admiral Olson's successor seemingly adds credibility to press reports about JSOC's alleged counterterrorism mission. The USASOC press release notes: "McRaven, a former commander of SEAL Team 3 and Special Operations Command Europe, is the commander of the Joint Special Operations Command. As such, he has led the command as it 'ruthlessly and effectively [took] the fight to America's most dangerous and vicious enemies,' Gates said."²² Recent news reports have also speculated about JSOC's role in the mission to eliminate Osama bin Laden.

NATO Special Operations Headquarters²³

In May 2010, NATO established the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ), which is commanded by U.S. Air Force Lieutenant General Frank Kisner, who had previously commanded U.S. Special Operations Command—Europe (SOCEUR). The NSHQ is envisioned to serve as the core of a combined joint force special operations component command, which would be the proponent for planning, training, doctrine, equipping, and evaluating NATO special operations forces from 22 countries. The NSHQ is located with the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium, and will consist of about 150 NATO personnel.

Current Organizational and Budgetary Issues

2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Report SOF-Related Directives²⁴

The 2010 QDR contains a number of SOF-related directives pertaining to personnel, organizations, and equipment. These include the following:

- To increase key enabling assets²⁵ for special operations forces.
- To maintain approximately 660 special operations teams;²⁶ 3 Ranger battalions; and 165 tilt-rotor/fixed-wing mobility and fire support primary mission aircraft.

²¹ Jennifer D. Kibbe, "The Rise of the Shadow Warriors," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 83, Number 2, March/April 2004 and Sean D. Naylor, "JSOC to Become Three-Star Command," *Army Times*, February 13, 2006.

²² U.S. Army Special Operations Command News Service, "Gates Nominates McRaven, Thurman for Senior Posts," Release Number: 110303-02, March 3, 2011, <http://www.soc.mil/UNS/Releases/2011/March/110303-02.html>.

²³ Information in this section is taken from Carlo Muñoz, "SOCEUR Chief Pegged: Air Force Two-Star to Head Up New NATO Special Ops Headquarters," *Inside the Air Force*, May 28, 2010 and NATO Fact Sheet, "NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ)," accessed from <http://www.NATO.int> on July 1, 2010.

²⁴ Information in this section is from Department of Defense, Quadrennial Defense Review Report, February 2010.

²⁵ Enabling assets are a variety of conventional military units that are assigned to support special operations forces.

²⁶ These teams include Army Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha (ODA) teams; Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) platoons; Marine special operations teams, Air Force special tactics teams; and operational aviation detachments.

- The Army and USSOCOM will add a company of upgraded cargo helicopters (MH-47G) to the Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment.
- The Navy will dedicate two helicopter squadrons for direct support to naval special warfare units.
- To increase civil affairs capacity organic to USSOCOM.
- Starting in FY2012, purchase light, fixed-wing aircraft to enable the Air Force's 6th Special Operations squadron to engage partner nations for whose air forces such aircraft might be appropriate, as well as acquiring two non-U.S. helicopters to support these efforts.

The significance of these directives is that they serve as definitive goals for USSOCOM growth and systems acquisition as well as directing how the services will support USSOCOM.

FY2012 USSOCOM Defense Authorization Request and Posture Hearings²⁷

In early March 2011, USSOCOM Commander Admiral Eric T. Olson testified to the Senate and House Armed Service Committees and, in addition to discussing budgetary requirements, also provided an update of the current state of U.S. SOF. Key points emphasized by Admiral Olson included the following:

- USSOCOM totals close to about 60,000 people, about 20,000 of whom are career members of SOF, meaning those who have been selected, trained, and qualified as SOF operators.
- Since September 11, 2001, USSOCOM manpower has nearly doubled, the budget nearly tripled, and overseas deployments have quadrupled. As an example, Admiral Olson noted that as 100,000 U.S. troops came out of Iraq, fewer than 1,000 were from SOF, and at the same time there was a requirement to move about 1,500 SOF to Afghanistan. As a result of this high demand for SOF, Admiral Olson stated that SOF is "fraying around the edges" and "showing signs of wear" but still remains a fundamentally strong and sound force.
- Admiral Olson further noted a slight increase in mid-career special operations troops with 8 to 10 years of service opting to leave the service.
- One of the key actions that USSOCOM is taking is to get SOF more "days at home" and predictability, and part of that effort is trying to relieve SOF members of jobs or responsibilities that can be done by other individuals or units.
- One problem that USSOCOM faces that contributes to fewer "days at home" for SOF personnel is the lack of readily available, local ranges so that SOF can conduct pre-deployment training. Such a lack of local ranges means SOF

²⁷ CQ Congressional Transcripts, Senate Armed Services Committee Holds Hearings on the Fiscal 2012 Defense Authorization Requests for the U.S. Special Operations Command and the U.S. Central Command, March 1, 2011 and Posture Statement of Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN, Commander, United States Special Operations Command Before the 112th Congress House Armed Services Committee March 3, 2011.

operators have to “travel to train,” which further increases their time away from home.

- USSOCOM is also developing a force generation system that will better interface with the services’ force generation systems, which is intended to provide better, more optimized force packages to the Geographic Combatant Commanders.
- Section 1208 authority (Section 1208 of P.L. 108-375, the FY2005 National Defense Authorization Act) provides authority and funds for U.S. SOF to train and equip regular and irregular indigenous forces to conduct counterterrorism operations. Section 1208 is considered a key tool in combating terrorism and is directly responsible for a number of highly successful counter-terror operations.
- Regarding equipment, USSOCOM is fielding the first of 72 planned MH-60M helicopters; is on the path to recapitalize the gunship fleet with AC-130J models; and the MC-130J program is on track to replace aging MC-130Es and MC-130Ps. USSOCOM plans to award a competitive prototype contract later this year for the Combatant Craft- Medium (CCM) to replace the Special Warfare Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB) and has also realigned funds from cancelled programs to fund the development of a family of Dry Submersibles that can be launched from surface ships or specialized submarines.

Vice Admiral McRaven’s Confirmation Hearing²⁸

On June 28, 2011, Vice Admiral (VADM) William H. McRaven appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee at a confirmation hearing for the position of Commander, USSOCOM. VADM McRaven provided the committee his views on a variety of issues.

- Major Challenges and Priorities: VADM McRaven cited Admiral Olson’s 2011 Posture Statement and suggested that he agreed with what Admiral Olson had presented in March 2011 as USSOCOM’s major challenges and priorities.
- VADM McRaven noted that “the current and future demand for SOF capabilities and foundational activities will exceed force deployment capability. SOCOM infrastructure and readiness accounts have not kept pace with SOF growth or demand. Current operations will pressure development and limit required modernization and recapitalization efforts.”²⁹
- When asked about what would be the most effective way the U.S. could advance counter terrorism in Yemen, VADM McRaven noted the effectiveness of International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds and Military Assistance funding in training and equipping Yemeni counter terrorism forces. In addition, continued SOF engagement with Yemeni counter terrorism forces was deemed essential.³⁰
- In terms of readiness and operational tempo (OPTEMPO), VADM McRaven stated that high operational tempo has impacted readiness. Because the vast

²⁸ Information in this section is taken from the written testimony of Vice Admiral William H. McRaven, USN, Commander Designate, U.S. Special Operations Command to the Senate Armed Services Committee, June 28, 2011.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

³⁰ Ibid., pp 18-19.

majority of SOF operations have taken place in the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of operations, “language proficiency and cultural awareness for other Geographic Combatant Commands have suffered.”³¹

- The inability to attend school and advanced training that is normally required for SOF personnel was also attributed to the high OPTEMPO. “Examples include reduced time for classroom language training/proficiency for all SOF; advanced Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) School; lack of fixed wing aircraft for live ordnance drops needed to train Joint Tactical Air Controllers; lack of vertical lift capability to train SOF ground forces and aircrew proficiency; lack of fixed wing refueling aircraft for helicopter in-flight refueling and ships available to conduct deck landing qualifications. Insufficient availability of non-SOF ranges to support SOF training is a significant issue.”³²
- A lack of U.S.-based rotary/tilt wing aircraft for aircrew qualification/proficiency and for SOF ground forces training. Many of these systems are either deployed or in depot-level maintenance.³³

FY2012 USSOCOM Budget Request

USSOCOM’s FY2012 Budget Request is \$10.5 billion—with \$7.2 billion in the baseline budget and \$3.3 billion in the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) budget.³⁴ This represents an increase of 7% over the FY2011 Budget Request of \$9.8 billion. USSOCOM has long maintained that it represents about 2% of the Department of Defense budget and provides maximum operational impact for a limited investment. Another one of USSOCOM’s perceived benefits is that its components take proven, service-common equipment and modify it with SOF funding for special operations-unique capabilities.

Shifting the USSOCOM Annual Funding Request to the Base Budget

USSOCOM is reportedly transitioning its annual budget request over the course of the next few years from Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding to the annual base budget.³⁵ USSOCOM is said to receive about one-third of its funding through OCO funding, which is reportedly the most OCO funding within DOD. This move to the annual base budget is in keeping with congressional intent for the majority of DOD funding to be in the annual budget and facilitates greater congressional oversight of the USSOCOM budget.

³¹ Ibid., p. 30.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Information in this section is from the United States Special Operations Command FY2012 Budget Estimates, February 2011 and Posture Statement of Admiral Eric T. Olson, USN, Commander, United States Special Operations Command Before the 112th Congress House Armed Services Committee March 3, 2011.

³⁵ Marcus Weisgerber, “U.S. Special Forces Shifting Funding Out of War Accounts,” *Defense News*, April 4, 2011.

FY2012 National Defense Authorization Act

National Defense Authorization Act for FY2012 (H.R. 1540) Report of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives³⁶

The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) recommended fully funding the President's FY2012 USSOCOM Budget Request and added additional funds for a variety of other programs. Major legislative provisions from the HASC are detailed in the following sections.

Special Operations Combatant Craft Systems (p. 39)

The budget request contained \$6.9 million for special operations combatant craft systems. The committee notes that U.S. Special Operation Command's fleet of Naval Special Warfare Rigid Inflatable Boats (NSW RIB) will be drawn down through fiscal year 2017. The committee also notes that the Mk V platform will leave service beginning in fiscal year 2012, and that the Combatant Craft Medium Mk1 (CCM Mk1) platform is projected to fill this important capability requirement for maritime special operations forces. However, the committee understands that delays in the CCM Mk1 program have created a capability gap in combatant craft that would potentially result in the number of available combatant craft falling below operational requirements, thus requiring a bridging strategy until the CCM Mk1 is fully fielded by fiscal year 2020. The committee believes this potential gap represents a serious national security concern as special operations forces are increasingly called upon to operate in a maritime environment. Therefore the committee recommends \$66.9 million, an increase of \$60.0 million, for special operations combatant craft systems to satisfy critical maritime requirements and address the capability gap created as the NSW RIB and Mk V Special Operations Craft fleets retire.

Special Operations Communications Equipment and Tactical Radio Systems (p. 39)

The budget request contained \$87.5 million for special operations communications equipment and electronics. The budget request also contained \$76.5 million for special operations tactical radio systems. The committee notes that military operations in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and elsewhere are increasingly distributed and heavily reliant upon a robust communications infrastructure and capability. The communications requirements for special operations forces continue to grow at a rapid pace, reflecting the remote locations from which these forces operate, the close work with local security forces, and the expansion of the U.S. footprint in key areas throughout the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The committee recognizes the critical importance communications systems will have in supporting a successful military strategy and protecting U.S. forces. Therefore, the committee recommends \$150.3 million, an increase of \$62.8 million, for special operations communications equipment and electronics to meet increased communications requirements for special operations forces. In addition, the committee recommends \$101.5 million, an increase of \$25.0 million for special operations tactical radio systems to meet increased tactical communications requirements for special operations forces.

³⁶National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2012 (H.R. 1540) Report of the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, Report 112-78, May 17, 2011.

Section 964—Report on U.S. Special Operations Command Structure (p. 191)

This section would require the Secretary of Defense to provide to the congressional defense committees by March 1, 2012, a report on U.S. Special Operations Command structure and make recommendations to better support development and deployment of joint forces.

Special Operations Aviation and Rotary Wing Support (p. 204)

The committee is pleased with the Department of Defense decision to establish a new U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command (ARSOAC) to enhance Army Special Operations Aviation as well as provide more capable rotary-wing solutions for Special Operations Forces. The committee is aware that the new command will be challenged to provide additional capabilities and improvements for Army Special Operations Aviation amidst ongoing overseas contingency operations, increased global requirements and potential future fiscal constraints. The committee therefore encourages the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities (ASD SO/LIC&IC), the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and the Commander, U.S. Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) to ensure continued communication with the defense committees to enable operational success and optimization of the rotary-wing force structure. The committee further encourages the Assistant Secretary, Commander, USSOCOM, and Commander, USASOC to continue to aggressively pursue programmatic and operational solutions to include modernization programs in an effort to address rotary-wing shortfalls for direct and indirect special operations activities and Special Operations Forces.

The Role of Military Information Support Operations (pp. 205-206)

The committee is aware of the Secretary of Defense's directed name change from Psychological Operations to Military Information Support Operations (MISO). This committee is also aware of an ongoing implementation strategy that will institutionalize this change within the Department. While the committee understands the rationale for this change, the committee notes with concern that the Department did not consult the congressional defense committees in a timely fashion as the Psychological Operations activity and mission is codified in Section 167 and Section 2011 of title 10, United States Code. The committee supports efforts by the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities to support geographic combatant commander and chiefs of mission requirements through the deployment of Military Information Support Teams and Regional Military Information Support Teams. The committee is encouraged that the Assistant Secretary has recently established an Information Operations Directorate dedicated to information operations (IO) and MISO, and supports ongoing reviews to improve the force structure and readiness framework of the Active Component of MISO through the establishment of the MISO Command. The committee expects these changes to contribute to a more comprehensive information operations and strategic communication (IO/SC) strategy that will effectively utilize and incorporate MISO to inform and influence foreign audiences with cultural precision and enable geographic combatant commanders and chiefs of mission to counter enemy narratives and activities. However, the committee is concerned about a growing operational, technical, and capability divide between the Active and Reserve Components of MISO forces which could limit options available to geographic combatant commanders and chiefs of mission as a tool to satisfy critical IO/SC requirements. The committee is further concerned about deficiencies in the reserve component of MISO and the resultant capabilities gap to provide support to the general purpose forces across the full spectrum of MISO. This capability divide between

Active and Reserve components could fracture overall U.S. Government efforts and activities, and limit the ability to field a globally persistent and culturally aware MISO force that is capable of informing and influencing foreign audiences, contributing to strategic and tactical IO/SC requirements, and integrating with other information disciplines. While the committee is encouraged that USSOCOM is shifting overseas contingency operations funds into base budget funds for Major Force Program (MFP) 11 funded MISO, it is concerned that a similar program shift is not taking place for the Reserve Component of MISO and therefore may potentially constitute a force structure, limited in capability, that is dependent on Overseas Contingency Operations funds. Therefore, the committee directs the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations, Low Intensity Conflict and Interdependent Capabilities in coordination with the Commander, USSOCOM to provide a report to the congressional defense committees that outlines: a comprehensive MISO strategy to include the roles, missions, authorities, and capabilities of MISO Active and Reserve Components; current and future force structure requirements, operational limitations and constraints; and efforts to shift required Active and Reserve Component funding from overseas contingency operations to base funding to support future active and reserve force structure requirements. The report should also examine and include recommendations for the potential transfer of proponentcy of the MISO Reserve Component from USSOCOM to the Department of the Army, similar to the potential transfer of proponentcy responsibilities for U.S. Army Reserve Component Civil Affairs forces. The report should also include an analysis of the relationship among all IO/SC disciplines to determine if they are sufficient or could be improved through changes to authorities, processes, procedures, and synchronization mechanisms. The committee further directs the Assistant Secretary to submit the report to the congressional defense committees in unclassified format (with a classified annex as required) within 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act.

U.S. Special Operations Command Undersea Mobility Strategy (p. 206)

The committee supports the recent program and strategy shift in the Undersea Mobility Program by the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command (WARCOM). The committee is pleased and supports recent reprogramming requests by USSOCOM and WARCOM to consolidate and shift Joint-Multi-Mission Submersible (JMMS) and Advance SEAL Delivery System (ASDS) program funds into a consolidated Undersea Mobility Way Ahead program designed to deliver more platforms sooner and at less cost across the Future Years Defense Program. The committee recognizes the critical operational importance of this program to provide technologically advanced undersea mobility platforms and address capability gaps for operating in denied maritime areas from strategic distances. The committee therefore stresses the need for continued communication with the congressional defense committees to ensure programmatic success and prevent previous program shortfalls in undersea mobility platform strategies.

NATO Special Operations Headquarters (pp. 234-235)

The committee recognizes the tremendous achievements of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ) in advancing and building a self-sustaining and interoperable special operations force across the alliance. The committee further recognizes the courageous direct and indirect contributions that NATO special operations forces have made particularly in Operation Enduring Freedom. The committee notes that the current authorized base funding level for the NATO Special Operations Headquarters is \$50.0 million and recognizes that this base funding level neither precludes nor prevents NSHQ from supplemental funding in support of additional overseas contingency requirements and encourages the Department of Defense to consider using Overseas Contingency Operations funds for this purpose where appropriate.

Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police Program in Afghanistan (pp. 238-239)

The committee is aware of an ongoing expansion of local security initiatives such as Village Stability Operations (VSO) and the Afghan Local Police (ALP) program, which are designed to empower local elders and marginalize the influence of the criminal and extremist insurgency. Under the leadership of the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command—Afghanistan (CFSOCC–A), these activities have grown in scope and scale, and are effectively empowering Afghans to stand up for themselves with close support from the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and coalition forces. To support VSO and ALP expansion, the committee is also aware that conventional U.S. infantry battalions have been assigned under the operational control of CFSOCC–A, which had heretofore been manned almost exclusively by Special Operations Forces. The committee is aware that U.S. Special Operations Command has responded to critical mission needs and emerging requirements in support of VSO and ALP and has realigned considerable Major Force Program (MFP)–11 resources, including communications equipment, vehicles, alternative energy technologies, and non-standard aviation fixed-wing aircraft. While these programmatic shifts in MFP–11 funding appear warranted, the committee is concerned about an increased reliance upon Government contracts to provide security guards at forward operating bases and facilities in support of U.S. Special Operations Forces, and Afghan and Coalition Forces. The committee is also concerned that as the Department of Defense expands VSO and ALP activities, other U.S. Government agencies have been unable to contribute a comparable and concomitant expansion of civilian led U.S. and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan development and governance initiatives and activities. Improper and inconsistent program expansion may jeopardize realized gains, encourage splinter and outlier activities not coordinated within the overall ALP strategy, and systemically further damage Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan credibility if Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Coalition Forces are unable to deliver security, development, and governance at the district, provincial, and national level.

Section 1201—Expansion of Authority for Support of Special Operations to Combat Terrorism (p. 239)

This section would increase the amount authorized for support of special operations to combat terrorism pursuant to section 1208 of the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108–375; 118 Stat. 2086), as most recently amended by section 1201 of the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 (Public Law 111–383; 124 Stat. 4385), from \$45 million to \$50 million, extend the authority through fiscal year 2014, and direct the Department of Defense to provide an implementation strategy that outlines the future requirements that would require similar authority in preparation for pending authority expiration.

CV–22 Combat Loss Replacement Funding (p. 253)

The budget request contained \$15 million for combat loss replacement funding and Special Operations Forces peculiar modifications for one CV–22 for a total of \$15.0 million. The committee notes that the fiscal year 2011 appropriations included funding for this combat loss replacement. The committee recommends no funds, a decrease of \$15.0 million, for combat loss replacement funding and Special Operations Forces peculiar modifications.

National MH–60 Combat Loss Replacement Funding (p. 254)

The budget request contained \$7.8 million for combat loss replacement funding and Special Operations Forces peculiar modifications for one MH–60 for a total of \$7.8 million. The committee notes that the fiscal year 2011 appropriations included funding for this combat loss replacement. The committee recommends no funds, a decrease of \$7.8 million, for combat loss replacement funding and Special Operations Forces peculiar modifications.

Defense Authorization Act for FY2012 (S. 1253) Report of the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate³⁷

The Senate Armed Services Committee SASC recommended fully funding the President's FY2012 USSOCOM Budget Request and added additional funds for a variety of other programs. Major legislative provisions from the SASC are detailed in the following sections.

Designation of Undersea Mobility Acquisition Program of the United States Special Operations Command as a Major Defense Acquisition Program (Sec. 155) (pp. 15-16)

The committee recommends a provision that would require the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics to designate the undersea mobility program, including the Dry Combat Submersible-Light (DCSL), Dry Combat Submersible-Medium (DCSM), Shallow Water Combat Submersible (SWCS), and Next-Generation Submarine Shelter acquisition programs under U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) as an Acquisition Category (ACAT) ID Major Defense Acquisition Program. Combat submersibles are used for shallow water infiltration and exfiltration of special operations forces, reconnaissance, resupply, and other missions. As demonstrated by previous combat submersible acquisition programs, these systems and associated support equipment are inherently complicated and expensive to develop and procure. According to the Government Accountability Office, approximately \$677.5 million was expended to develop and procure the Advanced SEAL Delivery System (ASDS) to fill USSOCOM's requirement for a dry combat submersible for special operations personnel. The ASDS program suffered from ineffective contract oversight, technical challenges, and reliability and performance issues. The first and only ASDS platform reached initial operating capability in 2003, approximately 6 years behind schedule. Unfortunately, the ASDS was rendered inoperable by a catastrophic battery fire in November 2008 and was deemed too costly to repair by the Commander of USSOCOM. The Joint Multi-Mission Submersible (JMMS) program was initiated in fiscal year 2010 to fill the requirement for a dry combat submersible, but cancelled later that year due to unacceptably high total program costs. Both the ASDS and JMMS programs were designated ACAT ID programs by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. In August 2010, USSOCOM announced a new acquisition strategy to meet its undersea mobility requirements consisting of the DCSL, DCSM, SWCS, and Next-Generation Submarine Shelter programs. USSOCOM also announced that these individual programs would be managed by USSOCOM, with milestone decision authority vested in the USSOCOM Acquisition Executive. The committee recognizes the enduring

³⁷ Information in this section is taken from U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, "Press Release: Senate Committee on Armed Services Completes Markup of National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012," June 17, 2011 and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, Report to Accompany S. 1253, Report 112-26, June 22, 2011.

requirement for undersea mobility capabilities for special operations forces and supports USSOCOM's efforts to acquire a family of wet and dry submersibles at a lower unit cost relative to previous programs by utilizing mature and commercial off the shelf technologies where available. However, the committee believes that the total acquisition costs, potential risks, and past history of undersea mobility acquisition programs necessitates the program oversight of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics.

Impact of Operational Tempo on Special Operations Forces (pp. 121-122)

The committee notes that since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the number of deployed U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) has quadrupled. While the budget and personnel assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has also increased during that time, the global demand for SOF continues to outstrip the available supply of such forces leading to frequent deployments and short dwell times. The Commander of USSOCOM testified earlier this year that "the force is beginning to fray around the edges. The fabric is strong, the weave is tight, it's not unraveling. But it's showing signs of wear." With regard to short dwell times faced by SOF, the Commander stated, "for some elements of our force, time at home with their families has become the abnormal condition. They have to adjust to being home rather than adjust to being away." The committee recognizes the continued sacrifice of SOF personnel and their families and applauds the efforts of USSOCOM to identify and proactively address the consequences of difficult and repeated deployments. Specifically, the committee strongly supports the creation of a "Pressure on the Force Task Force" by the Commander of USSOCOM to study the impact of high operational tempo on SOF personnel and their families and provide recommendations to the Command on mitigating current and future problems. The committee looks forward to learning more about the results of the Task Force's study and recommendations, especially as they apply to family readiness, suicide prevention, and retention. The committee also notes the success of the USSOCOM Care Coalition in providing support and advocacy for wounded, ill, or injured SOF personnel and their families. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has called the USSOCOM Care Coalition the "gold standard" of such efforts within the military. Accordingly, the committee encourages each of the military departments to identify and, where appropriate, adopt "best practices" of the USSOCOM Care Coalition where possible throughout their wounded warrior and family support programs.

Memoranda of Agreement on Synchronization of Enabling Capabilities of General Purpose Forces with the Requirements of Special Operations Forces (Sec. 903) (pp. 156-157)

The committee recommends a provision that would require the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and the services, not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, to produce formal Memoranda of Agreement establishing the procedures by which the availability of the enabling capabilities of the general purpose forces (GPF) will be synchronized with the training and deployment cycle of special operations forces (SOF). The Commander of USSOCOM has described the "non-availability" of enabling capabilities as USSOCOM's "most vexing issue in the operational environment." As the Commander of USSOCOM testified earlier this year, "SOF units must include a limited amount of these enabling forces to ensure rapid response to emerging requirements, but we were designed and intended to rely on the services to meet most of our combat support and combat service support requirements." The committee supports recent efforts, including those mandated by the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review, to build additional enabling capabilities within SOF and the GPF which can serve in direct support of SOF, especially in the areas of rotary-wing airlift, explosives ordinance disposal, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. A recent report required by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010

(Public Law 111–84) indicated that adequately enabling SOF in the future will require improvements to “the process by which SOF gains access to enabler support, and by synchronizing efforts with the Services.” The report also stated “Currently, SOF units divert scarce organic resources to satisfy enabler requirements and accomplish the assigned mission. In future operating environments, the effects of enabler shortfalls will be further exacerbated unless USSOCOM and the Services can better forecast the need for support, codify support through formal agreements, and eventually get SOF units and their GPF counterparts training together throughout the deployment cycle.” The committee notes that USSOCOM and the services, most notably the Army, have begun discussions with regard to the need to better align GPF enabling capabilities with SOF requirements. However, the committee believes that ongoing and planned reductions of GPF in Iraq and Afghanistan create additional urgency for reaching agreement on procedures for ensuring adequate GPF enabling support to deployed SOF.

Extension of Authority for Support of Special Operations to Combat Terrorism (Sec. 1205) (p. 203)

As requested by the Department of Defense, the committee recommends a provision that would extend the authority for support of special operations to combat terrorism contained in section 1208 of the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005 (Public Law 108–375), as amended, through fiscal year 2017. The committee has previously expressed concern with regard to the adequacy of the Department’s annual report and notifications required under this authority. The committee appreciates efforts by the Department to provide more detailed information in its annual report, but requests continued vigilance in providing complete details in notifications and in fully complying with all annual reporting requirements. The committee has also previously expressed concern with regard to the appropriateness of some support provided under this authority which appeared to be focused on long-term engagement and capacity building, rather than exclusively to support or facilitate U.S. operations to combat terrorism. The committee appreciates efforts by the Department to ensure funded activities meet the original intent of this authority, including closing out activities which have achieved their intended result or which no longer fit within the scope of the authority.

Special Operations Forces Aircraft Procurement (pp. 227-228)

The budget request included a total of \$150.8 million in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding for the replacement of two rotary-wing and one fixed-wing aircraft lost in combat by special operations forces. Funding for the replacement of these combat loss aircraft was appropriated by the Department of Defense and Full- Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2011 (Public Law 112–10) which was enacted after the President’s fiscal year 2012 budget request was submitted to Congress. Therefore, the committee recommends decreases of \$17.5 million in OCO Aircraft Procurement, Army, for one UH–60; \$70.0 million in OCO Aircraft Procurement, Air Force, for one CV–22; \$40.5 million in OCO Procurement, Defense-wide, for one MH–47G; \$7.8 million in OCO, Procurement, Defense-wide, for special operations peculiar modifications to one MH–60; and \$15.0 million in OCO, Procurement, Defense-wide, for special operations-peculiar modifications to one CV–22.

Possible Issues for Congress

Potential Impact of Army and Marine Corps Downsizing³⁸

On January 6, 2011, Secretary of Defense Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen announced that starting in FY2015, the Army would decrease its permanently authorized endstrength by 27,000 soldiers and the Marines would lose anywhere between 15,000 to 20,000 Marines, depending on their force structure review. These downsizings have implications for USSOCOM. The first is because USSOCOM draws their operators and support troops from the services (primarily from the non-commissioned officer (NCO) and junior officer ranks), USSOCOM will have a smaller force pool from which to draw its members. In addition, because the services will have fewer troops, they might not be as receptive to USSOCOM recruitment efforts in order to keep high-quality NCOs and junior officers in their current units. Another implication is these force reductions might also affect the creation and sustainment of Army and Marine Corps “enabling” units that USSOCOM is seeking to support operations. In this particular circumstance, Congress might decide to examine with the services and USSOCOM how these downsizing efforts might affect the creation of enabling units.

Initiatives to Increase SOF “Days at Home”

Because USSOCOM growth is limited due to the high entrance standards for SOF candidates, while requirements to deploy SOF are likely to continue at the current rate, efforts to increase SOF “days at home” to decrease stress on SOF and their families will probably need to focus on times when SOF units are at their home stations. One of the major factors cited by USSOCOM leadership is SOF units do not always have access to appropriate training facilities near their home stations, thereby necessitating travel away from their bases to conduct pre-deployment training. Given these circumstances, Congress might act to review USSOCOM proposals to improve the situation, whether by giving SOF priority access to existing training facilities, by modifying existing facilities to accommodate SOF training, or by building new SOF-dedicated training facilities closer to SOF bases. Factors that could limit efforts to improve SOF local training include the availability of land for military use, as well as existing environmental regulations that can preclude certain SOF-related training activities.

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³⁸ Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is taken from U.S. Department of Defense News Transcript, “DOD News Briefing with Secretary Gates and Adm. Mike Mullen from the Pentagon” January 6, 2011. <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4747>.